**The Fundamental Components of a Good Essay Structure**

A good essay requires a good structure; it needs to be clear and concise, and it needs to integrate ‘signposts’ throughout so that a reader is able to follow the logical argument that the author is making. There is no room for an author’s thoughts to wander away from the purpose of the essay, because such misdirection will lead to the reader becoming confused. To stop this confusion arising, various writing and reading conventions have developed over time. One of these conventions is the internal structure of an academic essay.

This internal structure resembles an ‘ɪ’ shape. The top horizontal bar represents the ***thesis***, or part of the essay that will comprise a ***thesis statement and one or more development statements.*** The ***thesis statement*** is the ***claim*** of the argument presented in the essay. Without this, the reader would not know what to expect the rest of the essay to develop. The ***development statement(s)*** are also crucial as they tells a reader which points will be used to support the argument, and also which order they will be presented in. If some of these points are not listed – or presented in a different order to the one stated – the reader might fail to understand the author’s intent, or even discount the steps used to support the argument.

The vertical bar of the ‘ɪ’ represents the ***main body*** of the essay, where each of the points presented in the development part of the thesis should be presented and discussed. Examples and references (citations) are generally included in these paragraphs, but it is important to note that each paragraph should contain only one main idea with examples or references that justify it. This main idea should be presented in a ***topic sentence*** at the beginning of the paragraph; these topic sentences act as signposts throughout the main body of the essay.

The bottom horizontal bar of the ‘ɪ’ represents the ***summary/conclusion*** of the essay. Here the thesis (main claim) and pieces of supporting evidence (different points that developed the argument) are restated briefly to show the reader why/how everything fits together. No new information should be added to the essay at this point.

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|  | **Thesis statement** **and development statement(s):** The central argument is stated, along with the points used to develop it, in the order that they will be discussed. All writing in the essay is focused on supporting this main, central argument. **Main Body**: Shows the reader how the writer is supporting the central argument by discussing the points stated in the thesis and development statement(s). The topic sentence of each paragraph will be related to a point stated in the thesis and development statements. The points must be discussed in the order in which they were written in the thesis and development statements. **Conclusion** – Summarizes the entire argument. May suggest new avenues for enquiry, but does not include new material. |

\*\* Materials adapted from those provided by Joanne Nakonechny, UBC Skylight \*\*

**Thesis and Development Statements Recap:**

**How to write a good thesis statement**

Your defining sentence/sentences must clearly state the main idea of your writing. You must include the subject you will discuss and the points that you will make about that subject ***in the order*** in which you will write about them.

**The value of development statements**

These list the different ***reasons (which will be accompanied with evidence)*** that the writer is going to use to support his/her claim. These narrowed or more focused points provide the steps of the argument to establish the validity of the thesis statement.

Note that if these reasons are too broad, the essay will be vague, because not all aspects of them can be addressed.

**Vague development example:**

“Science can solve starvation, disease and crime.”

**Stronger development example:**

“Science, through genetically modified foods and better crop fertilizers, can contribute to solving starvation.”

\*\* Note that this second example provides the reader with information about the specific steps the writer is going to use to support the thesis that science can contribute to solving starvation; genetically modified foods and better crop fertilizers are the reasons that the author is going to expand on to support his/her claim that science can contribute to solving starvation. \*\*

**Activity 1 (complete before the in-class session)**

Throughout these classes, you will develop an argumentative essay in which you state a clear thesis, make claims and supply reasons and evidence to support these reasons, and write a sound conclusion. To begin with, you must:

1. Identify a current controversy in science that interests you.
2. State your opinion and some of the reasons that you can use as evidence to support your position.
3. Come to class prepared to speak about these with a partner.